

□ 2045

HONORING PARREN MITCHELL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to praise a great man, a former Member of Congress, a former colleague of many who are still here, Parren Mitchell of Maryland.

Today, with the Maryland delegation, our distinguished majority leader, along with ELIJAH CUMMINGS, gave the eulogy today with both Senators present, the Governor of the State, the mayor of the city, all of the clergy, not all but a representation of it, and family and friends of this great man, Parren Mitchell.

Many Members of Congress who still serve here served with Parren, and they know he was a champion for economic and social justice.

Mr. Speaker, I want the rest of our colleagues to know about the Mitchell family. They were in the forefront of the civil rights movement; and, as a native Baltimorean, I knew full well the quality of their leadership and the extent of their effectiveness.

Parren Mitchell was a part of that leadership. He came to the Congress in 1971. He was the first African American from Maryland to serve in the Congress and the first African American since 1898 to come to the Congress from south of the Mason-Dixon line. So he made history when he came here, and he was a fighter who made progress while he was here. He was a pioneer and patriot. He fought for our country on the battlefields of Europe. He received the Purple Heart. He fought in the civil rights movement, and then fought here on the floor of the Congress until he decided to leave Congress.

It was wonderful to hear his nephew speak about him, and other representatives of the family speak about him, as an uncle and a friend and a mentor.

It was wonderful to hear the clergy speak of him as a child of the church, a truly religious person who brought his religion and his faith into public service.

It was wonderful to hear the elected officials sing his praises as ones who had learned from him, Senator MIKULSKI, Senator CARDIN. They had learned from him and worked with him. Again, he was a champion for many issues.

He was a founder of the Congressional Black Caucus, and I am so happy that he lived to see five members of the Congressional Black Caucus become chairs of the full committee in the House. We have Chairman RANGEL, who will be making our economy fairer and all of the economic justice that Mr. Mitchell talked about; and Chairman CONYERS, who did speak today about bringing the civil rights movement into our Congress, into our legislation, protecting and defending our Constitution and our civil liberties.

So it was a happy occasion, although he will be greatly missed. It was a celebration of his life that was enjoyed for many hours today in St. James Episcopal Church in Baltimore, Maryland.

Congressman SARBANES was there, along with his full family, his mother and father, former Senator Paul Sarbanes, his brother, Michael, and of course a Member of Congress we are very proud of, JOHN SARBANES.

And AL WYNN was there. We almost had all of the Maryland delegation, the Democrats, that is. And the delegation is almost all Democratic, but that is for another discussion on another day. AL WYNN was there representing the area nearest Washington, DC, but close to the service of Parren Mitchell.

When I spoke at the service I said we would be gathering here tonight to talk about Parren Mitchell and his wonderful contribution to our country and that they should tune in. But I wanted to tell you tonight what we saw today, which was a community who truly respected this great man and truly loved him and who will miss him sorely.

With the passing of Parren Mitchell, our Nation has lost one of its most passionate champions of justice and equality. I offer my deepest condolences on behalf of all of my colleagues in the House to Congressman Mitchell's family, friends, and all who loved him.

Growing up in Baltimore, I learned to revere the Mitchell family for their dedication to economic and social justice. Parren, his brother Clarence, and indeed his entire family, devoted their lives to ending racism and ensuring that our Nation's bounty was shared by all of its citizens. For that, we have all benefited. That is because their advocacy brought us closer to the ideal of equality that is both America's heritage and our hope.

The story of Parren Mitchell's life tracks the progress we've made. But it also shows how much farther we must travel to truly achieve justice for all.

At age 11, Parren Mitchell understood the reality of racism at its most violent and brutal. His older brother, Clarence, a true champion of social justice in his own right, came home one day and told of having just seen the body of a man who had been murdered—lynched—in Somerset County. In that moment, Congressman Mitchell would later say, he decided to dedicate his entire life to fighting for the rights of African Americans.

Years later, in 1950, after graduating from Morgan State, the University of Maryland refused to admit Congressman Mitchell to its College Park campus, telling him that it was "inadvisable" for blacks to attend. But that injustice would not prevent Parren Mitchell from pursuing his dream. He fought back. He won his court case. And Parren Mitchell became the first African-American graduate student at the College Park campus, and earned his master's degree in sociology. Because Parren Mitchell refused to see his dream of attending graduate school denied, many more were able to pursue their own dream of a graduate education.

Then, in 1971, when first sworn in as a Member of the House, Congressman Mitchell became the first African-American Member of Congress elected from the State of Maryland.

This achievement must have been tempered by the knowledge that he was the very first African-American elected to Congress from below the Mason-Dixon line since 1898. It took almost a century for a Black American from the South to find a seat here in the People's House.

Across the 85 years of Parren Mitchell's life—in his own story and the story of America—we see the slow march of progress. We celebrate today a man who made sure that, however slow at times, we continue to march in the right direction—toward peace, understanding, and justice for all.

Congressman CUMMINGS recently described Mr. Mitchell as "never concerning himself about fame or fortune but, rather, devoting himself entirely to uplifting the people he represented." That was apparent through his leadership as the first African American to chair the House Small Business Committee. There, he put into law guarantees that minority-owned business would share in public works and transportation contracts.

It is also a great testament to the leadership of Parren Mitchell that the organization he helped found—the Congressional Black Caucus—continues to serve as the conscience of the Congress and increase its ranks to the benefit of all Americans. I am sure Mr. Mitchell is looking down upon us today and that he is pleased that so many CBC members are here to honor him today.

With Congressman Mitchell's passing, we have lost a friend, a former colleague, and a passionate advocate for seeing that America's promise of freedom and equality are realized by all of our citizens. Whether in the Army, where he earned a Purple Heart, teaching at his alma mater, Morgan State, or serving his community as a social worker or a member of this body, Parren Mitchell dedicated his life to service. His loss leaves a void that we must work together to fill.

I hope it is a comfort to Congressman Mitchell's family and friends that so many people mourn their loss and are praying for them at this sad time.

REMEMBERING PARREN J. MITCHELL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, as a young man I worked on Capitol Hill for a United States Senator, along with the Speaker, Senator Daniel Brewster.

From time to time, Clarence Mitchell, Jr., one of the giants of American history in civil rights in America, would visit Senator Brewster; and I would have an opportunity to meet him. I was honored and awed to meet him. Many called him the 101st United States Senator. Clarence Mitchell, Jr., was the brother of Parren James Mitchell.

Shortly after I graduated from law school, I was honored by the citizens of my district who elected me to the State Senate. I went to the State Senate as a young man, but there was a young man 6 months younger than I. His name was Clarence Mitchell, III, Clarence Junior's son. We served together.

Over the years, I got to know very well Juanita Mitchell, an extraordinary family, an extraordinary family whose matriarch, Ms. Jackson, was an extraordinary leader in her own right.

Parren J. Mitchell was my friend. In 1981, many years after I met the Mitchell family for the first time, I ran for Congress. Juanita Mitchell and Parren Mitchell and Clarence Mitchell, III, were very helpful to me in that campaign. I represented a large African American population. They have always been very supportive of me and I of them. Parren Mitchell did a radio ad for me during the course of that campaign urging all in Prince George's County to elect me. That was a significant help, in my opinion, to my election.

He has been succeeded when he decided voluntarily to leave the Congress by two extraordinary representatives. One was Kweisi Mfume, who spoke at the funeral today; and the other was my colleague and my friend, the immediate past chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus which was founded by Parren J. Mitchell with Lou Stokes and others.

ELIJAH CUMMINGS spoke. He spoke powerfully and eloquently about the relationship that he throughout his life had with the Mitchell family and the impact that they made on him as an individual. The Mitchell family and Parren J. Mitchell in particular were extraordinary servants of the people, of our democracy, of our country.

When Parren J. Mitchell was sworn in as the first African American to represent the people of Maryland in Congress, he joined this institution at a landmark moment for equality in America. It was 1971. The Voting Rights Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1968 had already been signed into law. African Americans were making strides that once seem unimaginable; and the assassinations of leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X and Robert Kennedy raised questions as to what the future of the civil rights movement would be.

Parren Mitchell. Parren Mitchell, a man who took it upon himself to not only protect the legacy of the civil rights pioneers who had come before but to build upon the progress that made it possible for him to come to Washington in the first place.

Rather than be satisfied with how far the struggle for freedom and equality had come in recent years, Parren took responsibility for moving America even further, dedicating his life to ensuring that American society reflected the values and the principles for which this great country stands.

Parren was a founding member, as I have said, of the Congressional Black Caucus, a body that has transformed the way we approach issues of social and economic justice through an understanding that unity is the key to lasting change here in the United States.

Parren fought for fairness in American workplaces and institutions of

higher learning as a staunch advocate of affirmative action programs that opened the doors of opportunity to thousands of minorities. As the Speaker said today in her remarks, he was not only committed to equality but understood that equity, particularly ownership in our society, a piece of the pie, was absolutely essential as well.

Parren helped to enhance the fortunes of America's minority business community by introducing legislation ensuring that minority owned business enterprises have a fair shot at Federal contracts, a provision we see mirrored in local and State government contracting practices all over our Nation today because of the leadership and commitment of Parren Mitchell.

Parren's life was one of historic firsts, from the first African American congressman from Maryland to the first African American to receive a degree from my alma mater, the University of Maryland.

His life was also one of service, serving his country proudly and honorably as an officer in the 92nd Infantry Division during World War II and serving the people of Baltimore and our Nation as a man who would never give up fighting for what he knew to be right and just.

Coretta Scott King once said that struggle is a never-ending process, and freedom never really won; you earn it and win it in every generation.

We are all profoundly fortunate that a leader like Parren Mitchell was here to carry the torch of human progress that was passed down to his generation, and we all are profoundly grateful for his contribution to expanding the reach of civil rights and equal opportunity in America.

Mr. Speaker, as we commemorate the life of Parren J. Mitchell, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to his family and loved ones and many friends, to express my deep gratitude for his years of service to this House, the State of Maryland and this great country.

Parren J. Mitchell was short in stature, but he was a giant of a man. He stood tall. He stood with courage, he stood with commitment, and he stood with conviction for the rights of all Americans, not just those who were African Americans but of all Americans, irrespective of who they are, what they were, where they came from, how they worshipped. He knew that equality for one was absolutely essential if there was to be equality for all. America was blessed by the service of Parren J. Mitchell.

Today we heard of the love, the respect, and the honor with which he was held by his community. I am proud to join Speaker PELOSI from his beloved city of Baltimore; ELIJAH CUMMINGS who represents that city so well today and that district that Parren represented. He would be so proud, ELIJAH, of the representation you give to the 7th Congressional District. And to JOHN SARBANES whose father served

shoulder to shoulder with Parren Mitchell in this House from 1971 to 1976. He would be so proud of you, JOHN, and the role you play in representing that great city.

I was blessed, Mr. Speaker, to serve with Parren Mitchell for the time that he served and I served together. I learned from him. I am better because of him, and I miss him deeply.

□ 2100

HONORING THE MEMORY OF PARREN J. MITCHELL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great honor this evening to talk about my good friend and mentor, former Congressman Parren Mitchell.

I said today at his memorial service that Parren Mitchell was without a doubt a man of great humility. He was a mentor of mine; and many, many years ago we came in contact with each other. One of the things that he made clear was that being in elected office is not about seeking to be a celebrity. It must be about service. He was one who made it his business to serve his constituents to the nth degree.

If you were to ride around the 7th Congressional District, much of which is in the inner city of Baltimore, you would hear people, from presidents of corporations to the folks working in the markets to the bank tellers, call him PJ. They called him PJ not out of disrespect. They called him PJ because of their love for him and because of his humble spirit.

It was not unusual for Parren Mitchell to show up at a church or show up at a funeral or show up at somebody's Eagle Scout ceremony. He was the kind of guy who spent his lifetime trying to lift up other people.

The interesting thing, too, is that he did something for African American young people that very few have been able to do. When he ran for office in 1968, he lost by about 5,000 votes. Now, in many instances, if somebody got a total of 15,000 votes, which he did, and lost by 5,000, which he did, they would give up.

Two years later, Parren Mitchell came back and in 1970 was elected by a tremendous landslide margin of 38 votes, and that was so significant for us because back then I was in high school, and it showed me that an African American could be elected to the Congress of the United States of America.

In other words, what Parren Mitchell showed us was what we thought to be impossible was possible, and since that time we have seen Kweisi Mfume come to this body, and yours truly, and we've seen African American Congressmen from all over this country, and I would venture to say that he had a tremendous impact on others, in the Hispanic community and women and